

A NOTE ON APULEIUS' *METAMORPHOSES*¹

When the story of the wicked stepmother in *Metamorphoses* 10.2-12 is about to conclude with the death of the virtuous son, a member of the jury, an old physician, stands up and states what he knows about the case. It is worth recalling how Apuleius introduces the man: *unus e curia senior prae ceteris compertae fidi atque auctoritatis praecipuae medicus*. A textual problem arises when he begins his speech with this sentence:

‘Quod aetatis sum, uobis adprobatum me dixisse gaudeo...’

This is the reading of all the manuscripts without exception, but most editors modify the infinitive —*dixisse*— and print Beroaldus' *uixisse*. From a paleographical point of view, the differences between these words —*d/u* or *d/b*— are so slight that it might seem very easy to accept that they had been interchanged; there are not, however, many instances of this confusion². Both *dixisse* and *uixisse* are such common words that to speak of *lectio difficilior* in this case is simply of no advantage. The meaning of the text after this minimal correction is perfect:

¹ This note attempts to explain a passage which presents some textual problems in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*; although this reading has recently been maintained (see J. Martos, *Apuleyo. Las Metamorfosis o El asno de oro*, Madrid 2003, II, 166), it has not hitherto been defended. Thanks are due to the anonymous referees of the review for their helpful criticism and to J. Zoltowski for his revision of the English manuscript.

² As regards *Metamorphoses*, most of these consist in corrections of the type *adreptum* for *abreptum* (1.23.1; 1.25.1; 3.6.1; 4.3.3; 4.27.3; etc.) which can hardly be adduced as testimony.

Old as I am, happily I have lived my whole life with a good reputation among you...³

It seems clear that this man is stressing his own moral values as a witness before telling the story he knows. Nevertheless, this correction is far from being indisputable, as has been expressed elsewhere⁴. Oudendorp⁵, when commenting on this sentence, quotes the Digest on *de testibus* to confirm that the most important virtue of a witness was a respectable life:

Callistratus libro quarto de cognitionibus: testium fides diligenter examinanda est, ideoque in persona eorum exploranda erunt in primis condicio cuiusque, utrum quis decurio an plebeius sit: et an honestae et inculpatae uitae an uero notatus quis et reprehensibilis: an locuples uel egens sit, ut lucri causa quid facile admittat: uel an inimicus ei sit, aduersus quem testimonium fert, uel amicus ei sit, pro quo testimonium dat. nam si careat suspicione testimonium uel propter personam a qua fertur (quod honesta sit) uel propter causam (quod neque lucri neque gratia<e> neque inimicitiae causa fit), admittendus est⁶.

For this reason he labels with a *male* the procedure of Colvius, Floridus and the Roman edition, which kept the text of the codices. He also adduces a text by Cicero to confirm what

³ This is Hanson's translation — J. A. Hanson, *Apuleius. Metamorphoses*, Cambridge (Mass.) - London 1989, II, 231—, perhaps more literal at this point than those of Walsh (P. G. Walsh, *Apuleius, The Golden Ass*, Oxford 1994, 197) or Kenney (E. J. Kenney, *Apuleius: The Golden Ass*, London 1998, 178).

⁴ J. Martos, 'M. Zimmerman, Apuleius Madaurensis. Metamorphoses. Book X', *Habis* 35, 2004, 454.

⁵ F. Oudendorp, *Appuleii Metamorphoseon libri XI*, Lugduni Batavorum 1786, 694: 'Vide Callistratum lege 3. Digest. *de testibus*.' As for the first part of the text —*quod aetatis sum*— Oudendorp interprets as follows: '*Quod aetatis sum* significat *quantae aetatis sum*, ut dicitur *hoc aetatis est* vel *id aetatis est* pro hac aetate.'

⁶ Dig. 22.5.3 pr.

probably nobody would question: that if someone has lived a long and honourable life, he becomes a reliable citizen for the society he lives in:

Cic. *top.* 73

Nam et ingeniosos et opulentos et aetatis spatio probatos dignos quibus credatur putant.

Hildebrand⁷ agrees and also prints *uixisse* on the basis that:

Vixisse neque *dixisse* legendum esse cetera probant narrationis momenta, quia quae refert ad eius vitae probitatem ac fidem spectant, neque vero ad facundiam⁸.

In any case, Oudendorp himself provides an interesting interpretation of this expression both with *dixisse* and *uixisse*:

Quod aetatis sum, uobis adprobatum me dixisse vel vixisse gaudeo, i. e., laetor, me semper per tantum tempus, quantum vixi, *dixisse* sententiam vobis adprobatam, vel potius, *vixisse* vobis probatum, &, per compertam meam fidem, apud vos auctoritate valere.

It seems that Oudendorp is not absolutely convinced that the text of the manuscripts must be corrected. In contrast, Hildebrand, when reproducing this fragment, omits the first possibility, i.e., *dixisse sententiam vobis adprobatam*.

In her superb commentary on book 10, Zimmerman⁹ accepts the traditional correction against F's reading without further arguments and interprets the whole sentence as follows: *quod*

⁷ G. F. Hildebrand, *L. Apuleii Opera Omnia*, Hildesheim 1968 (= Leipzig 1842), II, 896.

⁸ One of the anonymous referees is right in assessing that Hildebrand simply misses the point: it is a question of *consilium*, not of *facundia*.

⁹ M. Zimmerman, *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses Book X. Text, Introduction and Commentary*, Groningen 2000, 153–4.

aetatis sum as an internal accusative with *uixisse* and *adprobatum* qualifying this accusative.¹⁰ She also provides a new quotation from Cicero regarding the importance of honest behaviour for winning authority: *non cani nec rugae repente auctoritatem arripere possunt, sed honeste acta superior aetas fructus capit auctoritatis extremos* (Cic. *Cato* 62).

Nevertheless, it does not seem absolutely necessary to emend the text as transmitted. It is possible to interpret it in much the same way as Oudendorp¹¹. In this case *dixisse* clearly has its widely used intransitive meaning of “to speak (in a court, political assembly, etc.), make a speech” (*OLD* s.v. **1b**; *ThLL* s.v. 970, 26 ff.). There are no exact parallels for *quod aetatis sum*, but in my opinion it should be regarded as an adverbial time clause, similar to e.g. *cum id aetatis essem, quod nunc sum* (as in Sen. *clem.* 1.9.1¹²) or just as Vallette (‘à l’âge où me voici¹³’) or Zimmerman herself (‘Up to this old age of mine’) translate. *Adprobatum* must be linked, of course, with me, the subject of *dixisse*, in a clear predicative sense. It should be noted, in passing, that the verb *approbo* is very often associated with *dico*: see *ThLL* s.v. 310.54–5 (and e.g. Cic. *Tusc.* 5.20.60, Liv. 10.35.16, Tac. *hist.* 5.17.3), 312.76–7. As for *uobis*, it is undeniably the usual dative construction with *adprobo* (*ThLL* s.v. 312.43–4, 77–9); but, as it can also be the object of *dixisse* (*OLD* s.v. **1**), an ἀπὸ κοινοῦ construction may

¹⁰ In my opinion, the text cited as an example on this point (Liv. 25.6.23) is unconvincing: *quidquid postea viximus id omne destinatum ignominiae est*.

¹¹ When paraphrasing, Oudendorp, for the sake of clarity, adds a *sententiam* and makes *adprobatum* agree with it; I assumed that he was taking the original *adprobatum* as a predicative construction with the subject *me*; however, although I still consider *dixisse* to be completely intransitive, one of the anonymous referees believes that Oudendorp takes *adprobatum* as neuter, direct object of *dixisse*.

¹² *Cum hoc aetatis esset, quod tu nunc es, duodevicensimum egressus annum, iam pugiones in sinum amicorum absconderat, iam insidiis M. Antonii consulis latus petierat, iam fuerat collega proscriptionis*. Perhaps *cum huius aetatis essem*, cf. Sen. *contr.* 9.6.6 (*illa cum huius aetatis esset nec noverca erat nec venefica*).

¹³ D.S. Robertson (ed.) – P. Vallette (tr.), *Apulée. Les Métamorphoses*, Paris 1956 (=1945²), III, 110.

be understood. Broadly speaking, it is by no means necessary to assume that, if someone has just mentioned his own age, he must go on to refer to his own life: in fact, this old physician has just said that he has spoken in court many times with the approval of his citizens¹⁴; or simply, as has been proposed by one of the anonymous referees: "you have followed my advice in the past: believe me now." Therefore, the meaning of the whole fragment could be explained as follows:

Up to this age of mine, I am very pleased to have
always won your approval whenever I have made a
speech before you.

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¹⁴ It could be objected that there is no prior evidence that this doctor would have spoken previously or habitually before his fellow-citizens, but we have just been told that he is an old and respectable man and, therefore, it should not be impossible to assume that at some previous time he has been a *decurio*, just as he is now —*unus e curia*—, and that he could have intervened in some other public assemblies or trials, as the reading of the manuscript itself suggests.

